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(56) Documents Cited

EP 0482846 A2

US 4616327 A

(58) Field of Search

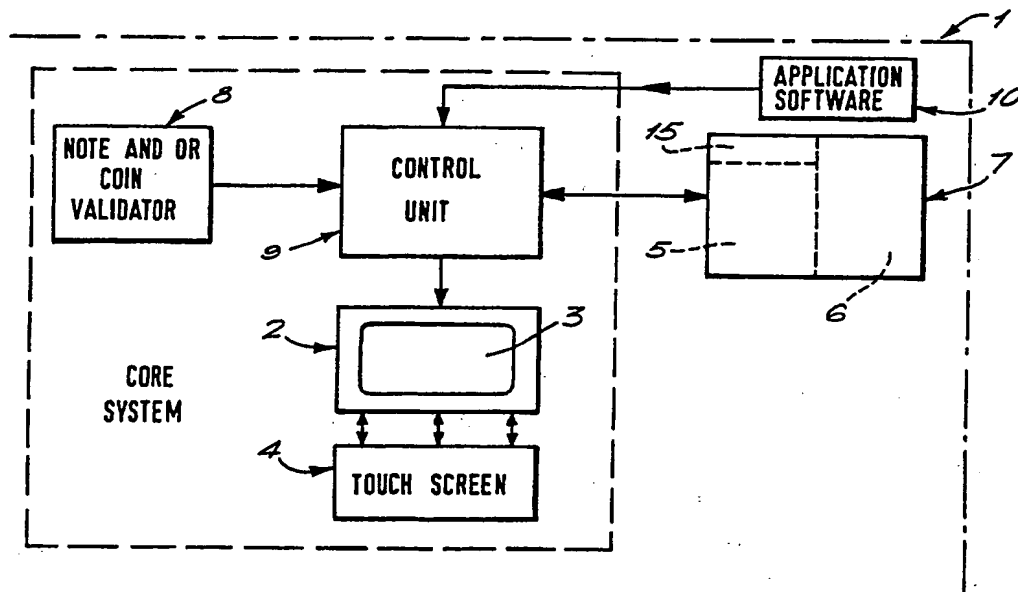
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(54) Vending machine

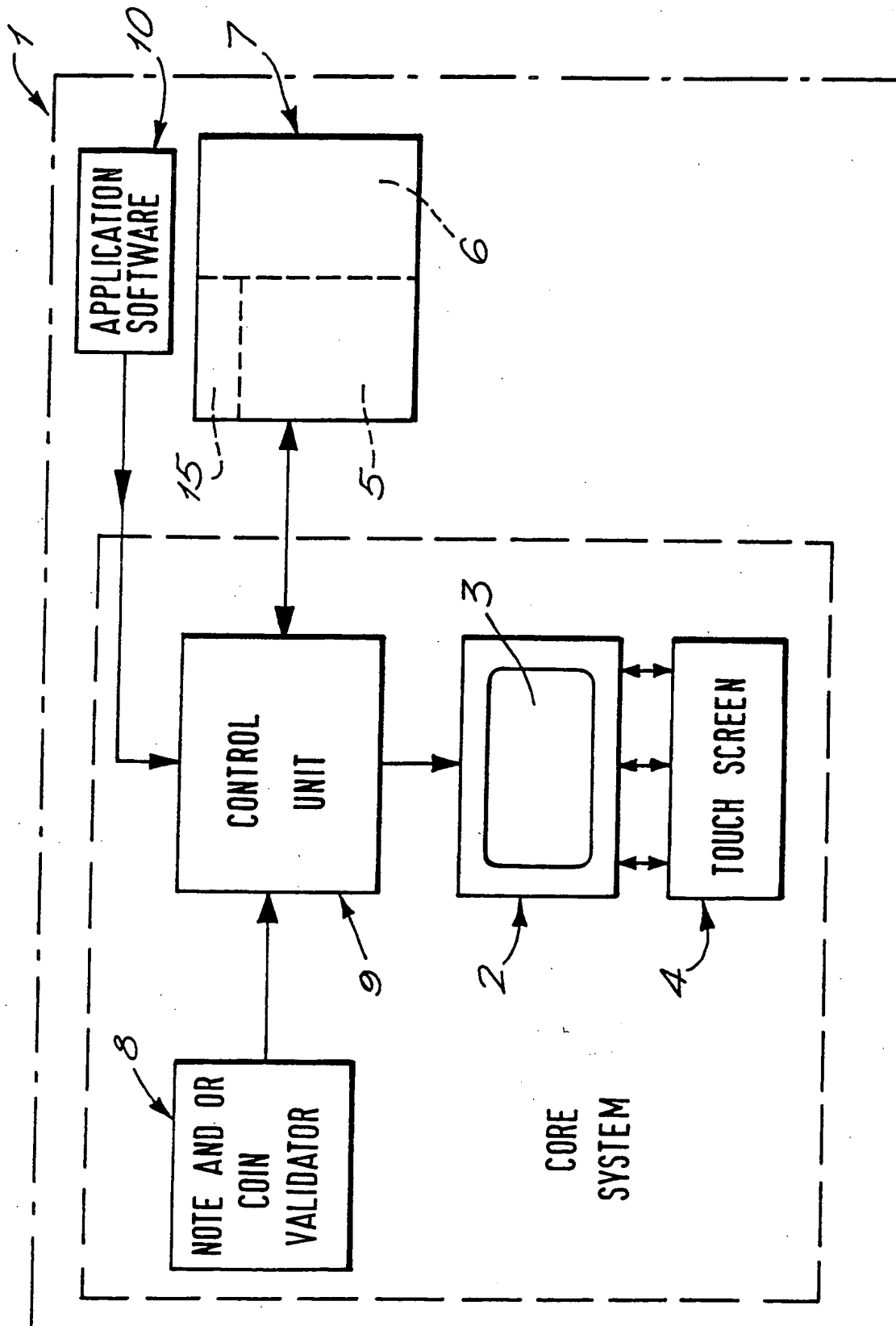
(57) A vending machine comprises electronic means, such as a cathode ray tube, 3, for displaying a picture to the user of the machine and incorporates a selection means in the form of a touch sensitive screen 4 for electronically colouring at least a part of the displayed picture. The displayed picture is dispensed as a monochrome representation which may include data relating to the selected colours together with colouring material in the form of a box of crayons and/or a pre-coloured representation of the picture usable as a guide for subsequent colouring of the monochrome representation. The machine is operable by the employment of suitable payment means such as a coin, token, bank note or credit card. The machine may include a colour printer to dispense the displayed picture bearing the colours selected in place of the monochrome representation.



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At least one drawing originally filed was informal and the print reproduced here is taken from a later filed formal copy.

The claims were filed later than the filing date within the period prescribed by Rule 25(1) of the Patents Rules 1995



IMPROVEMENTS IN OR RELATING TO VENDING MACHINES

This invention relates to vending machines.

According to the invention, a vending machine comprises electronic means for displaying a picture to the user of the machine, selection means for electronically colouring at least part of the displayed picture, means for subsequently dispensing a representation of the displayed picture and means for dispensing at least one additional artefact.

The electronic means for displaying a picture to the user of the machine preferably comprises a CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) unit.

The selection means for electronically colouring at least part of the displayed picture preferably comprises a touch sensitive screen.

The means for subsequently dispensing a representation of the displayed picture may comprise a monochrome representation.

The monochrome representation may bear data concerning the colours selected by the user of the machine.

Alternatively, the machine may incorporate a colour printer whereby a representation of the displayed picture bearing colours selected by the machine user is dispensed.

The one or more additional artefacts preferably comprise one or more articles having a connection with the displayed picture. For example, when a monochrome representation of the picture is dispensed, the additional artefact may comprise colouring material, in the form of a box of crayons, and/or a pre-coloured representation of the picture usable as a guide for subsequent colouring of the monochrome representation.

In addition, or as an alternative, the additional artefact may comprise a printed work. For example, a booklet describing the displayed picture or telling a story associated therewith.

Another alternative artefact may comprise confectionary. For example, a bar of chocolate.

The machine may be operable by employment of a coin, token, bank note or credit card.

The invention will now be described by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawing which illustrates a basic embodiment.

With reference to the drawing, a vending machine 1 comprise electronic means 2 in the form of a CRT unit for displaying a picture on the screen 3 of the unit to a user of the machine and colour selection means 4 in the form of a touch-sensitive screen for electronically colouring at least part of the displayed picture. The machine 1 further comprises dispensing means 5 for dispensing a representation of the displayed picture and means 6 for dispensing at least one additional artefact.

The means 5, 6 are incorporated in a common dispensing unit 7.

The machine 1 is provided with means 8 operable by employment of a coin, token, bank note, credit card or the like, to initiate operation of the machine by way of a machine control unit 9.

The control unit 9, which incorporates a computer, also controls the CRT unit 2 and dispensing means 5, 6.

Software causing the CRT unit 2 to display the required picture is provided by variable program means 10, whereby a selection of pictures may be provided.

The preferred picture to be displayed by the CRT unit 2 depicts "POSTMAN PAT", (Registered Trade Mark), a television character favoured by children, driving a van and accompanied by his cat, Jess.

In use, operation of the machine 1 is initiated by insertion of a coin, for example, in the means 8.

This causes one of several monochrome "POSTMAN PAT" pictures to appear on the screen 3 of the CRT unit 2, together with a pallet of 16 colours.

The user of the machine selects a colour by touching that part of selection screen 4 immediately above the colour and then touching the area of the displayed picture in order to colour that area. The computer incorporated in the control unit 9, then causes the touched area to be coloured in with the selected colour.

Subsequently, the user of the machine is provided (by dispenser 5) with a monochrome version of the displayed picture, which version may bear data concerning the colours selected by the user.

Simultaneously, the dispenser 6 is caused to dispense a box of crayons and/or other artefact additional to the dispensed version of the displayed picture.

The dispensed version of the displayed picture may comprise a pre-manufactured drawing, or a line drawing provided by an internal printer 15, which may be of the laser type.

In a modification, the printer 15 comprises a colour printer whereby the picture dispensed by the means 6 bears the colours selected by the user of the machine.

Various further modifications are possible.

For example, the at least one additional artefact dispensed by the means 6 may comprise a printed work, and/or confectionary, and a pre-prepared coloured representation of the displayed picture, to accompany a monochrome version when dispensed by means 5.

CLAIMS

1. A vending machine comprising electronic means for displaying a picture to the user of the machine, selection means for electronically colouring at least part of the displayed picture, means for subsequently dispensing a representation of the displayed picture and means for dispensing at least one additional artefact.
2. A machine according to claim 1 wherein the electronic means for displaying a picture to the user of the machine comprises a Cathode Ray Tube unit.
3. A machine according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the selection means for electronically colouring at least part of the displayed picture comprises a touch sensitive screen.
4. A machine according to any one of claims 1, 2 or 3 wherein the means for subsequently dispensing a representation of the displayed picture comprises a monochrome representation.
5. A machine according to claim 4 wherein the monochrome representation bears data concerning the colours selected by the user of the machine.
6. A machine according to any one of claims 1, 2 or 3 including a colour printer whereby a representation of the displayed picture bearing colours selected by the machine user is dispensed.
7. A machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein said additional artefact comprises one or more articles having a connection with the displayed picture.
8. A machine according to claim 7 as dependant upon claim 4 wherein the additional artefact may comprise colouring material.

9. A machine according to claim 8 wherein the colouring material comprises a box of crayons.
10. A machine according to claim 8 or 9 wherein the colouring material comprises a pre-coloured representation of the picture usable as a guide for subsequent colouring of the monochrome representation.
11. A machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the additional artefact is, or includes, a printed work.
12. A machine according to claim 11 wherein the printed work is a booklet describing the displayed picture or telling a story associated therewith.
13. A machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the additional artefact is, or includes, confectionary.
14. A machine according to any one of the preceding claims operable by employment of a coin, token, bank note or credit card.
15. A vending machine substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.



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Claims searched: 1 to 15

Examiner: Mr. G. Nicholls
Date of search: 19 May 1995

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

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Int Cl (Ed.6): G07F 11/72 17/00 17/16 17/26 17/40

Other: ONLINE : WPI

Documents considered to be relevant:

| Category | Identity of document and relevant passage | Relevant to claims |
|----------|---|--------------------|
| X | EP 0482846 A2 (HALLMARK CARDS) See especially column 5 lines 1 to 4, column 8 lines 4 to 12 and 49 to 55, column 11 lines 27 to 29, and column 16 lines 46 to 52. | 1-3,6,7,14 |
| X | US 4616327 (ROSEWARNE) See particularly column 5 lines 32 to 40 | 1,2,6,14 |

X Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step
Y Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.
& Member of the same patent family

A Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
P Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
E Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.

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